



Congressman Jon Porter

# Veterans Update

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*"It is the bravery and courage of our veterans that has protected our nation from foreign invaders and brought democracy to the far reaches of the world."*

## Porter Report - Veterans



On November 11, citizens across Nevada and the United States celebrated Veterans Day and payed tribute to the men and women who bravely served our nation. Each year on Veterans Day our nation pauses to remember those who selflessly stood in harm's way as the guardians of our most fundamental freedoms – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Veterans Day provides an opportunity for all Americans to express our thanks, our support, and our admiration for the brave men and women who have served our great nation. The observance of Veterans Day on November 11 each year helps to preserve in the hearts and lives of all our citizens the spirit of patriotism, the love of country, and the willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good.

We appreciate the service of each and every veteran, and we must remember them not just on Veterans Day, but each and every day as soldiers stationed across the world serve to protect all of us and the freedoms we hold so dear.

## Congress Achieves Historic Concurrent Receipt Solution

I am proud to announce that after more than a century of discrimination against disabled military retirees, Congress has passed legislation to provide concurrent receipt for more disabled veterans than ever before.



On November 7, 2003, the House of Representatives passed, with my support, HR 1588, the National Defense Reauthorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. This legislation contained a historic solution to the concurrent receipt problem and was passed by a bipartisan majority in a vote of 362-40.

As you know, currently many military retirees' retirement checks are offset by the amount of VA disability income they are entitled to. For too long, America's disabled military veterans have been unjustly penalized by the current offset.

Did you know?

- Nevada is home to more than 240,000 veterans

I have worked diligently since coming to Congress to address this unfair and unjust practice. Joining with one of the leading advocates for veterans, Rep. Michael Bilirakis from Florida, and with the leadership of the House of Representatives, I worked to craft a viable plan to deliver concurrent receipt to disabled veterans in Nevada and across the nation. To raise awareness of the importance of offering veterans concurrent receipt benefits, I joined with several of my colleagues in sending a letter to Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert urging congressional action to address the offset between military retired pay and VA disability compensation. After signing this letter to Speaker Hastert, I worked closely with many of my fellow first-term Members of Congress to champion the issue of concurrent receipt. I also attended several meetings with Majority Whip Roy Blunt who was closely involved in drafting the historic new concurrent receipt legislation. Throughout this process I stayed in close contact with veterans in Nevada and with representatives from Veterans Service Organizations including the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Fleet Reserve Association, and others.

More than 250,000 additional veterans will receive full concurrent receipt benefits under this legislation. All disabled retired veterans awarded the Purple Heart, all Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) disabled retired veterans, and all disabled retired National guard and reservists will now be eligible to receive both their full retirement pensions and full disability benefits. This legislation also establishes full concurrent receipt benefits for all remaining military retirees with a VA disability rating of 50% or above.

In addition, the House-Senate agreement would establish a "Blue Ribbon Commission" to review the current VA disability system. The Blue Ribbon Commission would work to eliminate any waste, fraud, and abuse in the current system and will continue to work to improve veterans' benefits. The Commission will be made up of 13 bipartisan members who will review the VA disability system and make recommendations to ensure the system adequately compensates veterans for disabilities. The panel will be appointed by the White House and Congressional leaders, and more than half the panel will be made up of highly decorated combat veterans.

Veterans have been waiting many years to correct this unfair penalty and deserve to be compensated fairly. I believe this plan is a significant step forward and one that honors our nation's veterans and their service to our country, and I will continue to fight for increased veterans benefits.

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## Legislative Update: Veterans Issues in Congress



In the months of October and November, I have been actively involved in fighting for increased veterans benefits. In addition to the landmark concurrent receipt solution, Congress has recently addressed several other issues important to veterans

I was proud to support HR 2297, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003, wide-ranging legislation that will greatly enhance and improve benefits to veterans in Nevada and across the country. This legislation incorporated provisions from several other bills intended to

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This legislation incorporated provisions from several other bills intended to increase support for a variety of veterans programs.

HR 2297 was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives on October 8, 2003. The Veterans Benefits Act would provide significant new support to veterans, particularly to disabled veterans and surviving spouses of veterans. Among the 19 separate improvements in the veterans' benefits package, HR 2297 would expand the Montgomery GI Bill program, make permanent the State Cemetery Grants Program, and reinstate the VA vendee loan program. For full details on this legislation, please visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

In order to honor veterans who have made the greatest sacrifice and gave their lives in defense of our nation, I joined with my colleagues in the US House of Representatives to pass HR 3365, the Military Family Tax Relief Act. This legislation, which I was proud to cosponsor, provides tax relief to American soldiers and will increase the amount of the military death gratuity payment from \$6,000 to \$12,000 while amending the tax code to make the full payment tax exempt.

The Military Family Tax Relief Act was passed unanimously by the House of Representatives on November 5, 2003 and was signed into law by President Bush on Veterans Day, November 11, 2003.

I was proud to support these important bills and will continue to work to increase veterans' benefits as your Representative in Congress.

## Contact Me

Should you require additional information regarding veterans' issues, if you would like to inform me of your views, or if you require assistance with Veterans Affairs claims, please contact me anytime in either my Henderson, NV or Washington, DC offices.